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->From the Editor's Keyboard           "Saying it like it is!"
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Terrorism, Ebola, election campaigns, and more - any good news going on in the world these days lately? It doesn't appear so, unless you search really hard. Well, at least the news media has plenty to do lately other than talk about Justin Bieber and the rest of the spoiled ones in the "entertainment industry"! Sorry, I couldn't resist! So, rather than dwell on the ilk of the world today, let's talk about stuff that's not as serious, but still informative!

Until next time...

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Super Smash Bros. for 3DS Packs Plenty of Punch

Life as a Nintendo mascot is pretty cushy. Every year or two, you iron your work clothes, jump around a little, save a world from disaster, maybe drive a kart, and then it's back to sipping 8-bit Mai Tais on Legendary Character Island. Let the nerds worry about Nintendo's future. You're an icon! Order room service!

The trouble with all that lounging? It makes you soft. Flabby. Weak. And while you might not think of yourself as a fighter, you suddenly become

one the minute a gamer turns on Super Smash Bros. for 3DS. Put down the drink and pick up a bat. Mario's coming for you, and he's got a hammer. And fireballs.

Thankfully, every mascot is deadly in the hands of a Super Smash Bros. player, a testament to the game's brilliant character design and accessible-yet-deep gameplay. Despite its diminutive stature, Super Smash Bros. for 3DS isn't just one of the biggest games ever released for Nintendo's handheld. It's also among its best.

Super Smash Bros. got its start 15 years ago on the N64, and while it's evolved a bit over the years, the basics remain unchanged: Famous video game characters duke it out on hilarious, game-themed levels using their fists, feet, and all sorts of crazy weapons. But where most fighting games require complicated inputs and ridiculous reflexes, Super Smash Bros. boils it all down to a couple of buttons and a few directions. The result is a chaotic, fast-paced slugfest that just about anybody can play.

This is the first time anyone's played it on a handheld, however. With the Wii U version still in limbo (Nintendo has yet to give a firm release date beyond holidays 2014, so really soon, we hope?), the 3DS version is currently the most important game in Nintendo's fall lineup. Some fans have expressed fears that it would suffer on the smaller system, and while it has its challenges, make no mistake: This is a big, bold, beautiful video game.

Super Smash Bros. for 3DS boasts a whopping 49 playable characters, the largest roster in franchise history. It's a who's-who of famous faces, from Nintendo icons like Mario, Link, and Donkey Kong to Pac-Man, Mega Man, and even longtime Mario rival Sonic the Hedgehog. Heck, the dog from Duck Hunt is in here. The character list is staggeringly cool, particularly if you're a fan of Nintendo's past.

Even cooler? You can create your own fighter using your little 3DS Mii avatar. You'll choose one of three archetypes (brawler, swordsman, or gunner), but that's just the start. Over the course of playing through the game's many modes, you'll earn items and abilities that will turn your bobble-headed familiar into a lethal kung-fu madman. It's a role-playing game crammed into a fighter.

There are a multitude of modes culled from past Smash Bros. games, but the real standout is the awesome new Smash Run adventure. Exclusive to the 3DS version, Smash Run gives players five minutes to collect ability-enhancing badges in a labyrinth crawling with enemies and treasures. Once those five minutes are up, the newly powered-up characters battle one another in a final challenge. It's terrific fun either solo or with a group.

Unfortunately, multiplayer—where a fighting game like Super Smash Bros. should shine brightest—has some issues. Online matches are beset with lag problems; I was dropped out of more matches than I completed. It's a shame, because hopping online and playing with friends or strangers is a fair share easier than playing local multiplayer, which, while certainly smoother, requires multiple 3DS systems and copies of the game. Portability has its drawbacks.

But regardless of how you choose to play, you'll be gobsmacked by the river of nostalgia running through Super Smash Bros. You and your buddy will bash each other while standing on the fuselage of Starfox's Arwing

ship, riding on a train from The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, and sitting in the living room from Nintendogs. A level based on Nintendo's artsy chat program Pictochat actually draws itself in while you play. You'll wield a sword made of Super Mario fireballs and capture enemies with the help of a Galaga alien. Smash director Masahiro Sakurai and his team clearly had fun making this game, and their fondness for the subject matter is infectious.

They've built a beauty, too. Super Smash Bros. for 3DS pops with color and charm. Concerns that the limited power of the 3DS would result in performance issues were unwarranted. It plays great as long as you keep it offline.

Making it all work is that gloriously simplified control scheme, though this is also where the game loses some of its steam. Take away its many bells and whistles, and you're left with a core that hasn't changed much in the past decade. Like the recent Mario Kart 8, Super Smash Bros. for 3DS doesn't deliver a terribly new experience so much as a lovingly crafted one.

Not that there's anything wrong with that. Super Smash Bros. for 3DS is Nintendo firing on all cylinders, a barrage of character and creativity that all but bursts out of the machine. Will it be outdated when its Wii U big brother shows up? Maybe, but you'll be having too much fun with this pint-sized pugilist to care.

Get Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare on Xbox One/PS4 for Free

If you're a Call of Duty fan who hasn't upgraded to a current-gen console but is planning to do so, Activision has a tempting offer to get you to buy Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare digitally. By buying a downloadable copy of the game on either Xbox 360 or PlayStation 3, you'll get the Xbox One or PS4 version (respectively) for free.

Activision announced the promotion today, and it's a lot like what it did last year with Call of Duty: Ghosts - except this time it isn't asking for \$10 to let you upgrade. (It's also identical to a recent Destiny promotion.) The only real catch is that you have to buy a digital copy of the game. Because this ties it to your Xbox Live or PlayStation Network account, you can't get a free Xbox One/PS4 game and then sell your physical copy or hand it to a friend. However, your 360 or PS3 copy will still work once you've downloaded your current-gen version.

In the case of Sony's systems, this is a Cross-Buy game, meaning a PS4 purchase nets you the PS3 copy or vice versa. It's unclear if the Xbox offer is 360-to-One only, but we've followed up with Activision to find out.

One important note: You can't move from one console family to the other. In other words, buying a PS3 copy can only get you a free PS4 game, and buying an Xbox 360 copy can only get you a free Xbox One game.

In addition to being able to upgrade to a current-gen version of the game for free, you'll be able to transfer other things. This includes any of your multiplayer stats and gear, as well as downloadable content you've purchased, including the season pass. If you're upgrading to the free game, you'll need to have bought a last-gen copy by March 31, 2015.

There is no deadline on transferring any DLC or progress across console generations.

Claiming your Xbox One or PS4 game (or DLC) simply involves logging into the same account as you made the purchase on, and browsing to it on the respective console's store.

Advanced Warfare launches on November 4, but you'll be able to get your hands on it a day early by preordering the Day Zero edition.

It's a Good Week to Get Back Into Diablo 3 on Xbox One/360 and PS4/PS3

No matter what console you own the game on (sorry, fellow PC players), Blizzard is offering some new incentives for Diablo III: Ultimate Evil Edition players to jump back into the game during the next week.

On Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, you'll receive a 100% bonus to experience, a perk that stacks with other, existing in-game bonuses, like items and shrines. That makes this an ideal time to create a new character, make that final push toward level 70, or pad out your Paragon level.

Considering the name of the game is items, Xbox One and PlayStation 4 players get a bonus that's arguably even more tantalizing: Treasure Goblin spawns have been doubled. Provided you're able to reliably kill them, that offers you a better chance of getting some good drops, not to mention more opportunities to visit the Vault.

The Vault is one of a number of things added in the 2.1.0 patch, which went live earlier this week on Xbox One and PS4. This introduced many of the features PC players have been enjoying for the past few months, like Greater Rifts and Legendary gems.

Both the last-gen and current-gen bonuses are now available and will remain in effect through October 17. In the case of 360 and PS3 players, you'll need to own the Ultimate Evil Edition to take advantage - the pre-expansion version of Diablo III won't do.

Microsoft's Amazing RoomAlive Will Turn Your Entire Living Room Into A Giant Xbox Game

Have you ever watched Star Trek and wished you could be in the holodeck interacting with exotic simulated environments? Well, Microsoft is making that dream more of a reality with a killer new concept that they're calling RoomAlive for Xbox.

The new concept they're striving for was just posted to the Projection Mapping Central blog by Microsoft researchers. It shows us the possibilities of what it would be like if the Xbox wasn't just on your TV. It shows us what it would be like if your Xbox was a fully immersive experience that engulfs your entire living room.

To make the RoomAlive a possibility, an Xbox owner would have to have a projector system that covered the entire room:

How this works is that the projector would display the Xbox game images throughout your living room, and then the Xbox Kinect would track your movement as you interact with them.

We don't know when we'll see the RoomAlive in action with Xbox games that use the technology, but here is a demonstration of how Microsoft intends on having gamers use it. Check out the video below for some RoomAlive tech in action.

To Play or Not to Play: The Great Debate About Video Games

With more than 90 percent of American kids playing video games for an average of two hours a day, whether that's a good idea is a valid question for parents to ask. Video games, violent ones especially, have caused such concern that the issue of whether the sale or rental of such games to children should be prohibited was brought before the Supreme Court.

In 2011, the Supreme Court ruled that video games, like plays, movies and books, qualify for First Amendment protection. "Video games," the court declared, "communicate ideas - and even social messages." But that didn't stop the debate. Real-life tragedies continue to bring attention to the subject, like the revelation that the Sandy Hook Elementary School gunman was an avid video game player. Parents seeking an easy answer to whether video games are good or bad won't find one, and two recent studies illustrate why.

While many studies have made a connection between violent video games and aggression in adolescents, research published in August in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found that teens who played mature-rated violent video games were also more likely to engage in drug and alcohol use, dangerous driving and risky sexual behavior.

Researchers evaluated more than 5,000 male and female teenagers between ages 13 and 18 over the course of four years and discovered that those who played violent video games were more rebellious and eager to take risks. The effect was greatest among those who played the most as well as those who played games with antisocial main characters.

But a study published in August in Pediatrics of nearly 5,000 girls and boys ages 10 to 15 revealed that children who played video games for less than an hour a day were better adjusted than children who either played no video games or played for three or more hours a day. These children were found to have fewer emotional problems and less hyperactivity, and they were more sociable overall. Video games, the study suggests, play a very small part in children's lives when compared to such influences as a child's family, school relationships and economic background.

So are video games harmful to children? "It depends on the content of the game and the outcome of interest," says Marina Krucmar, an associate professor of communication at Wake Forest University. "Violent games have been found to be associated with aggressive outcomes, increases in hostility and aggressive cognitions." There are several factors that may explain this.

First, there are no negative consequences for bad behavior. Players are rewarded for violence with points, reaching a higher level or obtaining

more weapons. And, Krcmar adds, players actively commit violence rather than passively watch it, as they may do through other mediums such as movies and television.

"Another issue is that our daily behaviors and interactions actually change our brains - that's why we encourage kids to study and read," Krcmar says. Research presented at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America in 2011 examined the neurological activity of a group of men who did not typically play violent video games but did so for the study over the course of one week, while a control group played none. MRI scans revealed that those who played the violent video games had less activity in the brain areas involved in controlling emotion and aggressive behavior. The control group showed no brain changes at all. "Keep in mind that these were players randomly assigned to play the games, not players who actively chose to do so," Krcmar says. "We can't argue here that people who seek out violent games are more aggressive to begin with."

The disadvantage of video games, other experts point out, is the simple fact that time spent playing them is time not spent doing such activities as reading a book, playing outside or engaging with friends. But that's not to say all video games are bad. There are positives to consider, too.

"Video game play is associated with improvements in hand-eye coordination, faster reaction times, improved visuospatial skill and peripheral awareness, while some educational games can also improve math, spelling and reading skills," Krcmar says.

A report published in the January issue of American Psychologist points out that shooter games, where split-second decision-making and attention to rapid change is necessary, can improve cognitive performance, while all genres of video games enhance problem-solving skills. And despite the belief that it's a socially isolating activity, one survey found that more than 70 percent of people who play video games do so with a friend, either cooperatively or competitively.

"Video games are a wonderful teaching tool," says Brad Bushman, professor of communication and psychology at The Ohio State University. Computer scientists from the University of California-San Diego recently revealed that children ages 8 to 12 who played a video game they developed that teaches how to code - for either four hours over four weeks or 10 hours over seven days - were successfully able to write code by hand in Java.

So what should parents do? Monitor content and the amount of time spent on video games, Krcmar advises. And Bushman warns that you shouldn't let your children play age-inappropriate video games. "Video games rated M for 'mature audience 17 and older' should not be played by children under 17," he says. And remember: "The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than two hours of entertainment screen time per day for children 2 to 17, and no screen time for children under 2," Bushman says. This applies to video games as well.

Giuliani To Defend Video Game Firm vs. Ex-dictator

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani will defend Activision in court against a lawsuit filed by disgraced Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega over the "Call of Duty" franchise, the video game maker said Thursday.

Giuliani joined the legal team fighting Noriega's lawsuit last month but had not been expected to argue the video game giant's case at an Oct. 16 hearing.

Noriega sued Activision Blizzard Inc. in July over his inclusion in 2012's "Call of Duty: Black Ops II." The former military dictator did not authorize the use of his likeness in the game, but Activision contends its usage is protected by the First Amendment.

The ex-dictator sued, claiming the game maker depicted him as a killer and enemy of the state. The game features a story line in which players capture Noriega, who in turn helps the game's villain.

Activision contends that Noriega plays a minor role in the game and his case should be dismissed.

"If successful, this case would obliterate the entire genre of historical fiction," Giuliani wrote in a statement. "I couldn't be more excited at the prospect of being back in court to defend the makers of Call of Duty against this convicted murderer who wants to make a mockery of the U.S. legal system and attack our right to free speech."

Previous "Call of Duty" games have featured historical figures such as President John F. Kennedy and Fidel Castro.

In a sworn declaration, Noriega wrote that he learned his likeness had been used in the game after his grandchildren played it and asked why one of the missions focused on capturing the ex-dictator.

Noriega's lawyers argue that the First Amendment defense doesn't apply because Activision copied the ex-dictator's likeness without consent and did not transform his video game character into something different from his actual persona.

"Here, Activision painstakingly created a character in its 'Black Ops II' game that was nothing more than a conventional, high-tech recreation of General Manuel Noriega," Noriega's lawyers wrote in a filing earlier this month.

Noriega was toppled in 1989 by a U.S. invasion and served a 17-year drug trafficking sentence in the United States. He later was convicted in France of money laundering, and that country repatriated him to Panama in December 2011. Noriega, 80, is serving a 60-year sentence for murder, embezzlement and corruption.

He has had health issues in recent months and has been treated for high blood pressure, flu and bronchitis. His family also has said he has a benign brain tumor and heart trouble.

Giuliani, who led New York City's government for two terms including during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks is also a former U.S. attorney and sought the Republican presidential nomination in 2008. In private practice, Giuliani worked as a free speech lawyer, representing major news outlets such as the Wall Street Journal and the financial magazine Barron's.

Online Users Grow! & Purr!

From Atari to Isolation: A Video and Written History of Alien Games

Alien: Isolation is the latest attempt by video game developers to create an enjoyable, respectful interactive adaptation of the 35-year-old Alien franchise. It rarely ends well.

While sneaking around blasting Xenomorphs in the face seems like the perfect concept for a shooter, not every game was able to capture the core of what makes those movies so great or those aliens so terrifying. You have one of the best haunted houses in science fiction in *Alien*, and then one of the most intense sci-fi action films in *Aliens*. And neither is easy to adapt into games.

With Isolation launching next week, here's where the Xenomorphs have been. Note: For the sake of brevity, we've decided to focus solely on the games following the main Alien franchise. While we don't discuss them here, we do acknowledge that the Alien vs. Predator games were pretty great.

Alien, Atari 2600 (1982): Fox Video Games made the first leap into licensing the Alien property for video games with what was essentially a Pac-Man clone skinned with elements from the 1979 film. Players controlled a human collecting Alien eggs (dots) and small planet and spaceship symbols (fruits) in a maze aboard the USCSS Nostromo while avoiding Alien drones (ghosts).

Drones could be killed by shooting them with a flamethrower or collecting symbols that would stun them (flashing dots). Alien predated the game considered the biggest flop in the industry's history, fellow Atari 2600 game E.T. the Extra-terrestrial.

Alien, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum (1984)/Amstrad CPC (1985): Developed by Amsoft and Concept Software and published by Argus Press Software, this second game to touch the Alien property was also based on the 1979 film, but with a little more flair.

Each game begins with one randomly selected crew member carrying the Alien. Once it is born, players can control any remaining crew members on a quest to kill the prowling Alien.

Alien included more gameplay elements pulled from the movie's plot, such as players having to locate a synthetic crew member aiding the Alien and put them into hypersleep. There was also an option to have the ship self-destruct.

Players were given a percentage score based on the state of the *Nostromo* and how many crew members were still alive at the end of the round.

Aliens: The Computer Game, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum (1986)/Apple IIe, Amstrad CPC, MSX (1987): There were two versions of this Activision-published game based on the 1986 film Aliens, the first sequel to the 1979 original. One adventure was in a first-person view

and mostly recreated the movie's plot, with the gang of Colonial Marines moving through rooms and clicking on Xenomorphs until they died.

The other version split the action between side-scrolling shooter and flight segments.

Aliens, MSX (June 1987): Developer by Squaresoft, this game scored by renowned video game composer Nobuo Uematsu was only released in Japan.

The side-scroller was more action-oriented than its predecessors, heralding the direction future adaptations would take. The game also featured more enemy types, a first for the property not only did players come up against Xenomorphs, but facehuggers as well as flying and laser-eyed aliens joined the fray.

Aliens, arcades (1990): Konami's shoot-em-up take on the 1986 Aliens film included more enemies, more action and more high-stakes fights like with the Xenomorph Queen. As Ripley, players used weapons like the Smartgun and missile launchers to blow up Xenomorphs. The game loosely followed the movie and included several very un-Aliens like elements, including levels playable as the character Newt.

Aliens, 1987

Alien 3, Amiga, Commodore 64, Sega Game Gear, Sega Genesis, Sega Master System, SNES (1992, 1993): While 1992's Alien 3 is certainly not considered the best film in the series, the video game tie-ins that came with it fared slightly better.

Alien 3 from developers Probe Entertainment and Eden Entertainment Software's wasn't one of them. The game, again setting players in Ripley's shoes, tasked players with running-and-gunning through levels that were poorly designed and featured enemies that couldn't be killed unless both them and you were on the same screen.

Alien 3 also suffered from nearly unforgivable camera problems, as players would often outpace it across the screen. In the time between blasting Xenomorphs in the face, players completed missions such as rescuing prisoners and fixing broken systems on the planet Fiorina 'Fury' 161.

Our opinions editor, Ben Kuchera, loves this game and is wrong.

Alien 3, Game Boy (1993): Bit Studios' portable adaptation of Alien 3 is also not the best way to experience the world of Alien 3. The top-down shooter featured chains of generic-looking rooms with the occasional generic black squiggly thing meant to represent a Xenomorph.

Aliens, 1990

Alien 3: The Gun, arcades (1993): Sega's first foray into Alien games was a first-person rail shooter, which, it turns out, is a snug way to wrap up the Alien world into a video game.

One or two players had to plow through waves of the Xenomorph mess on Fiorina 'Fury' 161, using all the expected weapons.

Aliens: A Comic Book Adventure, PC (1995): In a reprieve from all the shooting and exploding, developer Mindscape's point-and-click adventure not only made the Aliens feel scary, but added a little more to the

franchise by spinning different plot threads through the game.

As an ex-Colonial Marine named Lt. Col. Henricksen, after the actor playing Bishop in the films, Lance Henriksen, players responded to a distress call from their team and set off to explore and solve puzzles to combat the Alien threat.

It's a quieter adventure than the series had known previously and would in the future.

Alien Trilogy, PlayStation, Sega Saturn, PC (1996): Probe Entertainment's third Alien game packed the plots of the first three movies (loosely) into a first-person shooter.

Text boxes would explain the story before throwing players into the chaos of near-constant Xenomorph blasting. However, although the game made good in recreating the terror inspired by the original films, many people criticized the game for being id Software's horror shooter Doom in a different skin.

Aliens: A Comic Book Adventure, 1995

Aliens Online, PC (1998): Using the same engine that built Half-Life, Mythic Entertainment created an online space in which players could choose to play as Colonial Marines or Xenomorphs and kill the heck out of each other.

One of the title's most notable features was its janky AI, with aliens spending quite some time trying to walk through walls. The servers for Aliens Online were shut down in 2000 after the GameStorm network was sold to Electronic Arts.

Alien: Resurrection, PlayStation (2000): Argonaut Games' Alien: Resurrection, based on the 1997 film of the same way, is widely considered a flop. After spending years in development hell, the game's Dreamcast version was canceled, and the PlayStation version was released to mixed reviews.

The biggest criticism against the game was its control scheme; Resurrection, in addition to being the first full 3D Aliens titles, was one of the first games to use one analog stick to move and the other to aim. What were they thinking?

Aliens: Thanatos Encounter, Game Boy Color (2001): Publisher THQ dipped its toes in the Aliens pool with a top-down shooter featuring controls equally as unloved as Resurrection's. The screen was split in two, with the top half showing a top-down view of your character in action and the bottom half showing your weapon and sometimes the motion tracker.

In Thanatos Encounter, from developers Wicked Witch Software and Crawfish Interactive, players selected one of three generic Colonial Marines and set them to shooting Xenomorphs and saving scientists across 12 levels using most of the guns introduced by the franchise.

Aliens Online, 1998

Aliens: Unleashed, mobile (2003): Yes, they went there. Sorrent's Aliens game was a first-person shooter that did what it could with the limited technology and space available on mobile devices at the time.

Players had to shoot synthetic Xenomorphs used for training that had gone on a rogue killing spree. Not the deepest of Alien experiences, but the first to hop onto the mobile train.

Aliens: Extermination, arcades (2006): Things were quiet on the Aliens front until 2006, when Play Mechanix brought the Xenomorphs back to the arcade.

Extermination, another light gun shooter, loosely followed the plot of Aliens and allowed two players to mow down the offensive creatures with pulse rifles. The game was similar to Sega's Alien 3: The Gun with much improved visuals.

Aliens: Infestation, Nintendo DS (2011): Developed as a collaboration between WayForward and Gearbox Software and published by Sega, Infestation could be considered one of the better Aliens games.

Players chose four from 19 Marines and sent them into battle against the Xenomorphs. In addition to the Metroidvania elements of being able to backtrack for new stuff, Infestation also implemented a permanent death system. When your Marine died, they were dead.

This game is loosely connected to what would be Gearbox's next Alien game, Aliens: Colonial Marines.

Game over, man: The ongoing Aliens: Colonial Marines lawsuit

Aliens: Colonial Marines, PC, PS3, Xbox 360 (2013): Developer Gearbox and publisher Sega are still at odds over this one. Based on Aliens and Aliens 3, Colonial Marines was initially slated for release in 2009 but was delayed due to numerous factors one of which was Rebellion's 2010 title Alien vs. Predator.

The story is set directly after the film Aliens and follows a group of Colonial Marines on a search-and-rescue mission for Ellen Ripley and the rest of the team sent to LV-426 during the movies' events.

Not only was the game received poorly, but in-game assets looked strikingly lower-quality than the game's marketing materials. Shortly after launch, a Wii U version was canceled, and Gearbox and Sega were slapped with a lawsuit claiming the companies falsely advertised the game. Documents filed by Sega of America last month regarding the case blame Gearbox, stating the company kept its publisher in the dark and often overstepped boundaries during development.

Alien: Isolation, PC, PS3, PS4, Xbox 360, Xbox One (2014): Announced almost one year after the disastrous launch of Colonial Marines, Isolation takes a different turn by focusing on the survival-horror aspects of the original franchise. As Amanda Ripley, daughter of Ellen, players will be stalked by a single, unkillable Alien throughout the space station Sevastopol, using stealth tricks to survive. Developer The Creative Assembly is hoping to make the game feel like "Ridley Scott's haunted house in space." Check out our review.

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Sen. Wyden: NSA Tech Spying Hurts Economy

Google Chairman Eric Schmidt and other Silicon Valley executives say controversial government spying programs are undercutting the Internet economy and want Congress to step up stalled reform.

"We're going to end up breaking the Internet," warned Google Inc.'s Schmidt during a public forum Wednesday convened by U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., who has been an outspoken critic of electronic data-gathering by the National Security Agency. Schmidt and executives from Facebook Inc, Microsoft Corp. and other firms say revelations of extensive NSA surveillance are prompting governments in Europe and elsewhere to consider laws requiring that their citizens' online data be stored within their national borders.

Rules like that would drive up costs and create technical obstacles to the way the Internet currently operates, making it "profoundly difficult in terms of our ability to deliver services," said Facebook general counsel Colin Stretch. Brad Smith, general counsel for Microsoft, said some European customers are worried their data will be more vulnerable to U.S. government snooping, although he declined to give specific examples.

"The reality is this is a real problem for American tech companies," said Smith. "If trust falls, then the prospects for business are hurt."

Wyden, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee and chairman of the Finance Committee, convened the roundtable in the Palo Alto High School gym, where he played basketball as a student in the 1960s. He said he will take the executives' message back to Washington, where bills to curb surveillance have stalled. Prospects for passing a reform bill this fall are shrinking, Wyden told The Associated Press.

"I'm going to my best to use this. What I'm going to do is say there's a clear and present danger to the Internet economy," Wyden said.

Wyden contends that the government's "digital dragnet" of phone calls, emails and online communications doesn't make the country safer, and only hurts the U.S. economy.

"When the actions of a foreign government threaten red-white-and-blue jobs, Washington gets up at arms. But, even today, almost no one in Washington is talking about how overly broad surveillance is hurting the U.S. economy," he said in opening remarks.

Microsoft's Smith acknowledged that concerns over recent terrorist incidents in the Middle East may have undercut some public support for surveillance reform. However, he contends that "laws that the rest of the world doesn't respect will ultimately undermine the fundamental ability of our own legal processes, law enforcement agencies and even the intelligence community itself."

When former NSA contractor Edward Snowden made details of NSA surveillance tactics public, tech executives and industry experts warned that consumers

and business customers would fear that U.S. technology companies can't protect sensitive data from government prying. Some analysts estimated last year that U.S. tech companies could lose tens of billions of dollars in sales, particularly after European firms began marketing themselves as being more secure than U.S. competitors or less vulnerable to legal demands from the U.S. government.

Most of the impact has been anecdotal, however. A few companies, including Cisco Systems Inc. and Qualcomm Inc., have said they believe they lost some deals in China and other emerging markets because of concerns about U.S. spying. Germany did cancel a contract with Verizon this summer, citing a fear that it may provide customer phone records to the NSA. Some tech startups and telecommunications companies in France and Switzerland have claimed an increase in sales to customers who are wary of U.S. providers.

It's difficult to quantify the losses because "companies don't always know about the deals that they weren't invited to be a part of," said Daniel Castro, a senior analyst at the nonprofit Information Technology and Innovation Foundation in Washington, D.C. Castro estimated last year that losses to U.S. tech companies could amount to \$35 billion by 2016. He said this week his estimate is still valid.

Wyden has called for strict controls on the NSA and complains that a pending reform bill, authored by Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., doesn't go far enough to restrict so-called "back-door" or warrantless searches of emails and online communications by Americans. The Obama administration has endorsed the Leahy bill, while defending government surveillance programs as narrowly defined and necessary for tracking foreign terrorist suspects. Wyden is backing separate legislation that would increase the authority of the government's new Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

A coalition of leading online companies including Google, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft continue to urge Congress to pass reform. The companies also have beefed up their own security measures, through encryption and other methods intended to rebuff snooping by individual hackers or government agencies.

That's put Silicon Valley at odds with federal authorities. Attorney General Eric Holder, who announced last month that he is leaving the Justice Department, has complained that recent encryption moves by Apple Inc. and Google could hinder vital law enforcement investigations.

S. Korea Rumor Crackdown Jolts Social Media Users

South Korea's president is cracking down on rumors in cyberspace in a campaign that threatens the popularity of Kakao Talk, the leading social media service in a country with ambitions to become a global technology leader.

Prosecutors announced the crackdown two weeks ago after President Park Geun-hye complained about insults directed at her and said false rumors "divided the society."

That rattled users of Kakao Talk, a smartphone-based messaging app used by 35 million of South Korea's 50 million people. It prompted a surge of

interest in a previously little-known German competitor, Telegram.

Rankey.com, a research firm, said an estimated 610,000 South Korean smartphone users visited Telegram on Wednesday, a 40-fold increase over Sept. 14, before the crackdown was announced. The company said its estimate was based on a randomly selected group of 60,000 people it follows regularly.

On Friday, Telegram was the most downloaded free app in Apple's App Store in South Korea. On Google Inc.'s store, Telegram was the No. 2 downloaded free communications app, behind only Kakao Talk.

South Korean users left reviews on Telegram saying they left Kakao Talk to seek "asylum." They asked Telegram to add a Korean language service.

The uproar threatens to slow adoption of social media or send South Korean users to foreign services, undercutting government ambitions to build a high-tech "creative economy."

"It will definitely limit the number of new signups, as users opt for services which are not subject to monitoring," said Jon Bradford, a managing director at startup accelerator TechStars in London. "Any policies that the Korean authorities only impose upon local businesses will damage their competitiveness both at home and abroad."

South Korea is one of the most wired societies, with 85 percent of its people online and 40 million smartphones. The government has promised to step up financial support for tech startups.

Kakao Talk's dilemma echoes criticism of U.S. technology companies following disclosures of widespread government surveillance. Internet and other companies have struggled to reassure users while saying they are legally obligated to cooperate with authorities.

This week, China's telephone regulator said it approved Apple Inc.'s new iPhone 6 for use on Chinese networks after the company promised never to allow other governments secret "backdoor" access to users' data. In Germany, the consumer privacy regulator of the major city of Hamburg told Google it must obtain Germans' permission before using information about them to create profiles for email and other services.

Park's government has been sensitive about the Web and social media after it came under criticism following a ferry sinking in April that killed 300 people, most of them high school students.

Yong Hye-in, a 24-year-old college student, complained her friends were targeted for unjustified data collection after she was detained during a protest in May demanding government action over the ferry disaster. She received a notice that her house and her Kakao Talk account had been searched with a court's approval.

Yong was alarmed to find investigators obtained personal information of people she contacted. That included messages, photos and videos and network addresses.

"It was an indiscriminate collection of data of people around me," she said. "They should weigh how much (my friends) were involved in the case."

Jung Jinu, an opposition politician, complained investigators who looked

into his role in a protest over the ferry tragedy collected messages and phone numbers from his 3,000 contacts on the service. He said many used Kakao Talk to discuss social, labor and political issues.

"It is no different from eavesdropping," Jung said.

Kakao Talk, owned by Daum Kakao, an Internet portal and app developer, denied it gave authorities data of Jung's friends. But the court warrant that Jung showed said all messages he sent and received between May 1 and June 10 were subject to search.

Park ordered the justice ministry last month to investigate unfounded stories in cyberspace. At a Cabinet meeting on Sept. 16, she complained about insults about her and said online rumors have "gone too far and divided the society," according to the presidential office's website.

Two days later, prosecutors announced the launch of a team to monitor online information. They said anyone who posts or passes on information deemed false will face punishment. They said that for "grave matters," investigations will begin without waiting for complaints and offending information will be deleted.

The Seoul prosecutors' office did not respond to repeated phone calls seeking comment. News reports say authorities will only monitor public posts on Twitter, Facebook, online forums and Web portals, not private messages exchanged on online messengers.

Officials at Kakao Talk said authorities cannot look at users' messages without a court order.

"We are aware of such concerns," the co-CEO of Daum Kakao, Lee Sirgoo, told reporters on Wednesday.

Lee said the company had "top security technology" to prevent leaks and only stored messages for a short time.

However, he said, Kakao Talk is "subject to South Korean law" and "when there is a fair execution of law, we cooperate with prosecutors" by handing over information.

So far, the potential for users to migrate to Telegram, which has fewer features such as emoticons, or other messaging providers is unclear.

Rankey.com's survey showed about 90 percent of users of devices that run Google's Android, the most popular operating system in South Korea, visited Kakao Talk every day. Only 2 percent launched the Telegram app at least once on Wednesday.

Some people say Kakao Talk could protect users by encrypting their data. But the company said it saves messages for up to five days in unencrypted form to allow users to copy them onto multiple devices.

Responding to growing surveillance concerns, Kakao Talk said Thursday it would reduce the storage period to three days.

Yong, the college student, said she has joined Telegram. She also tries to meet people in person instead of using messengers. But she said too many people still use Kakao Talk, so she cannot stop using it completely.

Facebook Obtained Nearly \$2 Billion From Legal Judgments Against Spammers

Facebook users share billions of pieces of content every day, but a lot of it is spam. Facebook combats spam by banning accounts, adjusting the News Feed algorithms and filing lawsuits against habitual violators. In fact, Facebook has obtained nearly \$2 billion in legal judgments against spammers that they have sued.

Facebook is particularly interested in taking on fake likes because businesses want to see real engagement results. Businesses won't achieve results and could end up doing less business on Facebook if the people they're connected to aren't real. It's in our best interest to make sure that interactions are authentic, said Facebook Site Integrity Engineer Matt Jones in the announcement.

Spammers have incentives to create fake accounts on Facebook. Spammers are often paid to generate likes for Facebook Pages. For example, several users on the website Fiverr.com sell 1,000 Facebook Likes for \$5. Spammers generate the 1,000 Facebook likes by creating fake accounts or hacking into real accounts. Unfortunately, many Facebook Page administrators are fooled into thinking that those likes are from real users.

Facebook's abuse-fighting team constantly updates automated and manual systems to catch suspicious actions like mass user registration, rapid liking and malware-related messaging. Facebook aggressively removes fake users and limits the number of Page likes per account to hinder fraudulent activity. If an account is flagged as suspicious, then Facebook asks for additional verification.

Facebook also heavily depends on reports from users that encounter spam. Facebook learned from the reports that someone who sends the same message to over 50 people on his or her friend list in the span of an hour is likely a malware victim. Another indicator of spam is if 75% or more of friend requests sent are ignored.

In November 2008, Facebook won an \$873 million judgment against Adam Guerbuez and Atlantis Blue Capital for allegedly sending spam messages to Facebook users. Guerbuez reportedly received book deal offers and was featured in Largest Award Ever under the CAN-SPAM Act in the 2010 Guinness Book of World Records.

One year later, Sanford Wallace (also known as Spamford and the Spam King) turned himself in after a federal grand jury in San Jose indicted him for spamming Facebook. Facebook claimed that Wallace compromised 500,000 accounts between November 2008 and March 2009 to use for sending over 27 million spam messages. Facebook sued Wallace and a federal court ordered him to pay a \$711 million judgment for sending unsolicited wall posts and messages through the social network. Wallace denied the charges and was released on a \$100,000 bail.

Philip Porembski was ordered to pay Facebook \$360.5 million in statutory damages and was banned from using the social network in January 2011. Porembski's company PP Web Services LLC allegedly hacked over 160,000 Facebook accounts and sent over 7.2 million spam messages to users.

It is unlikely that Facebook collected the vast majority of the judgment awards that were won in these three landmark cases. Both Wallace and

Guerbuez filed for bankruptcy after losing court cases related to spam. However, the judgments likely discouraged many other potential spammers from spreading malware on the social network.

There are several ways to protect yourself from fraudulent activities on Facebook:

1.) Avoid buying fake likes

When you buy likes from a third-party website for your Facebook Page and notice that there is a lack of engagement, then those accounts are likely fake. Facebook's News Feed algorithms surface content towards the top if there is higher engagement. Having a higher number of Page likes does not mean you will be ranked higher on the News Feed. This is why you should avoid buying likes through a third party website.

2.) Use caution when it comes to potential malware

There are several ways that spammers lure victims into malware attacks. Spammers often post clickbait content that sounds interesting such as: check out this shocking video, See these unbelievable photos of you or click here to receive special features on Facebook. If you think that your computer has malware, then you should change your password, run a virus scanner and upgrade your browser to the latest version.

3.) Use the Build Audience ADNC +2.9% tool on Facebook

Facebook said that obtaining likes should not be one of your key business goals unto itself. However, Facebook can help with certain business objectives such as driving website traffic, increasing in-store sales or increasing awareness of an app. Facebook Pages can use the Build Audience feature, which has targeted marketing for the News Feed. Using Facebook's own advertising services are generally more effective than working with third-party websites that guarantee a substantial number of likes.

Snapchat Says It's Not Responsible for User Photos Leak

Snapchat Inc., the maker of a mobile application for disappearing photos, said it's not at fault for a leak of images from its service.

Photos from Snapchat users were posted onto the Internet yesterday, even though the Los Angeles-based startup bills itself as a service that deletes pictures after they're sent. In a statement today, the company said it wasn't responsible for the incident and blamed third-party apps that people had been using with Snapchat for the leak.

We can confirm that Snapchat's servers were never breached and were not the source of these leaks, Mary Ritti, a spokeswoman for the company, said in a statement. Snapchatters were victimized by their use of third-party apps to send and receive Snaps, a practice that we expressly prohibit in our Terms of Use precisely because they compromise our users' security.

Snapchat, which is valued at \$10 billion, apologized for a breach earlier this year that caused data such as users' phone numbers to be exposed. The startup also had to settle claims by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission in May that it deceived users by falsely promising its photo messages would disappear forever after they were shared, even though there are several workarounds.

Snapchat's statement today that it isn't at fault echoes the comments made by Apple Inc. (AAPL:US) last month after nude photos from celebrities such as Jennifer Lawrence who had used its iCloud service were leaked onto the Web. While Apple ended up increasing security features, the Cupertino, California-based company said at the time that iCloud wasn't breached and that hackers targeted celebrity accounts using security questions and passwords.

Snapchat said it vigilantly monitors third-party apps for security and has succeeded in getting dozens of them removed from app stores. Ritti said Snapchat doesn't know which third-party apps were responsible for the leak.

The company, led by Chief Executive Officer Evan Spiegel, is under scrutiny as it has ridden its fast user growth to a position as an elite technology startup. Users send more than 700 million disappearing snaps a day through the service and more than 500 million stories are viewed daily, the company has said.

Yahoo! Inc. is close to investing in the startup at a \$10 billion valuation, a person with knowledge of the situation said last month, putting it among a group of eleven-digit valuation startups that also includes Airbnb Inc. and Uber Technologies Inc. Venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers has also invested in Snapchat at that valuation, people with knowledge of the matter have said.

Last year, Spiegel turned down an offer from Facebook Inc. to buy Snapchat for \$3 billion. Facebook started its own product to send ephemeral photos and videos after being rebuffed.

Snapchat, which makes little to no revenue, has been working to be taken seriously as a business. Spiegel said this week that people are going to see the first advertising on the service soon. Chief Operating Officer Emily White was in New York last week for the Advertising Week conference, explaining the service. Earlier this year, the company hired Facebook executive Mike Randall to lead its advertising partnerships.

Facebook Builds New App That Allows Fake Names

Since its founding Facebook has demanded authentic names from users, but in a contradiction of that policy, Facebook may be attempting to create a new social media site based on anonymity.

Facebook is believed to be working on a stand-alone mobile application that allows users to have any name they want, according to The New York Times. The app, which is supposed to be unveiled in coming weeks, is an experimental take on Facebook's longstanding demand for user authenticity.

[Authenticity] is part of what made Facebook special in the first place, Chris Cox, Facebook's chief product officer, said according to the Times. By differentiating the service from the rest of the internet where pseudonymity, anonymity, or often random names were the social norm.

Recommended: Are you savvy about social networks? Take our quiz to find

out.

The app is being developed by a group of developers who helped create the social media site Branch, which Facebook bought in January. This new app would be in the spirit of Secret or Whisper, which allow users to share anonymous photos and posts. The two sites have become popular with younger users.

Facebook spokespeople would not confirm the development of an anonymous app to the Times.

But recent events show that Facebook still isn't fully backing the anonymous user. In September, Facebook began enforcing its policy that users use their real name. This caused an uproar among members of the LGBTQ community, who often use different names online for a number of reasons. Users protested the policy, and Facebook eventually apologized.

It isn't clear how the new anonymous app will protect users from trolls or spammers. But previously, Facebook insisted that its real-name policy was used to protect users.

The stories of mass impersonation, trolling, domestic abuse, and higher rates of bullying and intolerance are oftentimes the result of people hiding behind fake names, and it's both terrifying and sad, Mr. Cox told the Times.

Facebook has been buying up small social media apps in an attempt to become a suite of products. Facebook bought the photo-sharing app Instagram in 2012 for \$1 billion, it just closed a \$22 billion deal with messaging app WhatsApp, and in June it bought Slingshot, a photo-app that lets users share photos that disappear after a few seconds. Instagram already allows for users to have any username they chose.

As Facebook continues to grow its product line, it seems clear that Facebook (the company) doesn't have a clear policy on anonymity even if Facebook (the website) does.

Hewlett-Packard Announces Plan To Split in Two, Target 3D Printing

Hewlett-Packard has confirmed it will split itself into two companies, one focused on cloud computing services and the other focused on 3D printing and computing.

The California-based company has made the announcement in the wake of thousands of job cuts in recent years.

It has struggled to maintain market share in the PC sector as consumers and business customers shifted toward mobile devices.

As a result, demand for its desktop, laptop, and printer products has waned, reducing its sector presence.

The company said the PC and printer business will use the name HP Inc., while the data storage services business will take the name Hewlett-Packard Enterprise.

Current boss Meg Whitman is to be the president and CEO of the cloud

division, and Dion Weisler is to be the equivalent for the PC and printing division.

The company promised investors that the split would make it more competitive and better able to deliver shareholder value.

Our work during the past three years has significantly strengthened our core businesses to the point where we can more aggressively go after the opportunities created by a rapidly changing market, Whitman said.

The decision to separate into two market-leading companies underscores our commitment to the turnaround plan.

It will provide each new company with the independence, focus, financial resources, and flexibility they need to adapt quickly to market and customer dynamics, while generating long-term value for shareholders.

HP Inc. will continue using the existing corporate logo, with the cloud services choosing an alternative design.

In recent weeks HP has been running mainstream television advertisements highlighting its cloud storage and corporate solution-solving services.

The two new public companies are expected to be trading by the end of its 2015 fiscal year, and, once complete, HP stockholders will own shares of both companies.

HP is expected to complete the latest round of redundancies, between 11,000 to 16,000 people, this month on top of the 34,000 people it had already cut from its payroll.

The news comes less than a week after eBay said it would spin off its lucrative payment system, PayPal, next year.

Facebook Possibly Planning A Secret New Use For Messenger

Many people don't want to trust Facebook with their real names. Now new evidence suggests that Facebook wants people to trust them with their money.

Last summer, Facebook started forcing users to switch to a separate messaging app, Facebook Messenger. We knew Facebook was trying to diversify and take over your phone with this move, but some leaked screenshots hint that it's going to use Messenger to create a Venmo-like service for people to pay their Facebook friends.

If Facebook's service is like the popular payment app Venmo, it will allow people to pay each other for anything they like, whether it's rent money or a cab ride. People use the free app to pay their friends by hooking Venmo up to their bank accounts.

Some leaked screenshots show what looks like a payment service.

Facebook declined to comment to The Huffington Post.

This development shouldn't come as a huge surprise, since PayPal's president, David Marcus, moved to Facebook to lead the company's

messaging products last summer. Still, it's hard to imagine people trusting Facebook with their money, since the social media company has been so sketchy with people's private data.

The last time Facebook tried to get into e-commerce (with "Facebook Gifts") it didn't go so well. Facebook discontinued this feature last July.

Apple Officially Hosting an Event Oct. 16; New iPads, iMacs Expected

A detail from Apple's invitation for its forthcoming iPad event.

Apple's 2014 is not finished yet.

On Wednesday, Apple announced the date and time of its second special event of the fall, where the technology giant is rumored to be revealing a new line of updated iPad tablets and iMac computers with crisper displays. The event will take place Oct. 16, starting at 1 p.m. Eastern/10 a.m. Pacific.

Invitations to the event were sent out to the media this afternoon. Rumors and reporting up to this point suggest that the October event will be much more low key than the company's Sept. 9 bonanza, where CEO Tim Cook premiered the iPhone 6, the iPhone 6 Plus, and the yet-to-be released Apple Watch.

As far as we can tell, there will be no mysterious cubic journalist barn nor a surprise appearance from a generally past-its-prime rock band. No, this event will likely be more low key.

The most prominent pre-event rumors suggest that Apple will make its iPad screens bigger, much like it did with its latest batch of iPhones. The tablets may also be equipped with Touch ID sensors that allow you to unlock your phone via fingerprint, a capability first introduced with the iPhone 5s.

As for the iMacs, they'll likely have ultra-high-resolution displays and be released alongside OS X Yosemite, the revamped desktop operating system that Apple announced at the Worldwide Developers Conference in June. Though these iMacs will apparently feature the similarly thin frame of their predecessors, 9to5Mac reports that they'll also come with a bunch of shiny new guts, like better WiFi antennas and faster processors.

The Old GIF Format Gets A Revamp

GIF "images" (Graphics Interchangeable format) are a common part of the Internet, often seen on message boards and picture-sharing sites like imgur and tumblr. They are popular, since they act as slow moving animations and can be used in a multitude of ways. GIFs have been around for decades, and they might soon be receiving an update by Imgur.

The problems with GIFs are that they are not very functional. They are

usually large in size, since they need to save each individual frame and incorporate 256 colors. This severely degrades picture quality, to the point that it s sometimes difficult to tell what s happening. This is where Project GIFV comes in. GIFV, which stands for GIF Video, updates the old format by compressing the recorded video with the standard H.264 codec, and packaging it in an MP4 container. This not only improves video quality, but significantly reduces the file size. During one test, they were able to compress a 50MB GIF to a 3.4MB MP4.

In a blog post, Imgur said: "The converted MP4s are significantly smaller than their equivalent GIFs, which allows them to load at lightning-fast speeds with better quality," and "By lowering bandwidth consumption, the change also optimizes Imgur for users on mobile. Rejoice!"

Mobile users will appreciate the change, since service providers usually place data limits data on mobile. "Rejoice" they will indeed, when they view better quality content.

Don t count the GIF format out just yet, because for some, its poor quality and tacky performance is exactly why people appreciate its "old school" look. Imgur is adamant and plans to present the GIFV format to the Internet Engineering Task Force and the World Wide Web Consortium to use as its new standard.

How readily the new format is adopted is yet to be seen, but rest assured, the GIF isn t going anywhere, at least in the near future.

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